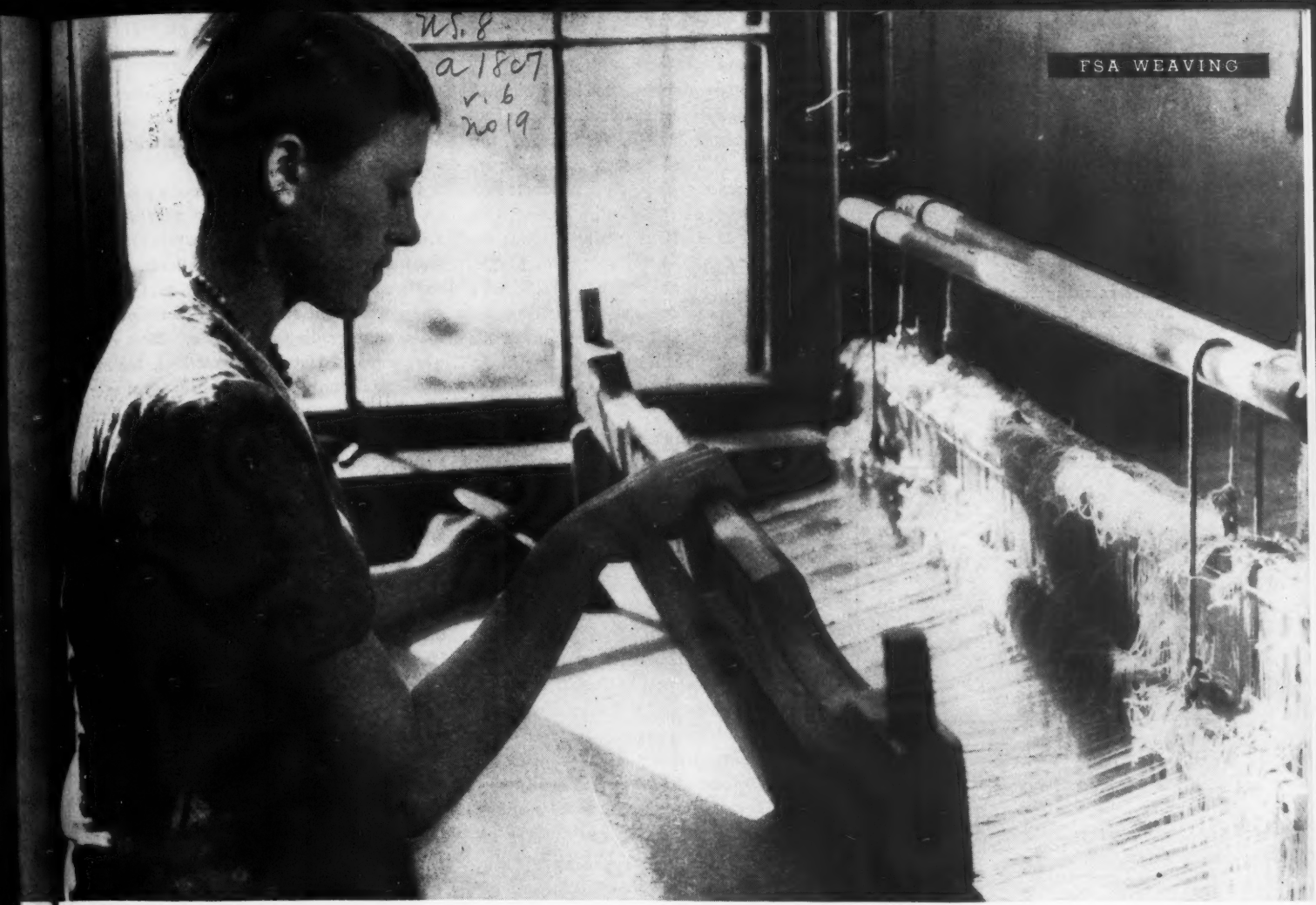
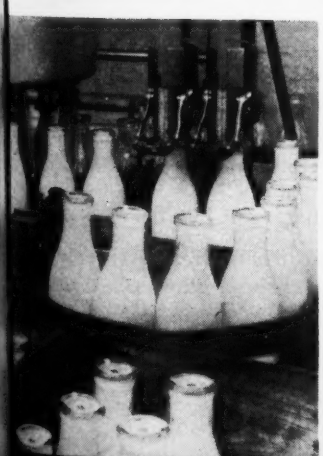
U.S.
a 1807
v. 6
no 19



CONSUMERS' GUIDE

AUGUST 1940


MILK GLOSSARY

SELF-HELP CO-OPS

FURNITURE

PINEAPPLE

CONSUMERS' GUIDE

AUGUST 1940 VOLUME VI, NUMBER 19

A Publication of the
Department of Agriculture
Washington, D. C.

Issued monthly from June through September; Semi-monthly from October through May

Prepared by
Consumers' Counsel Division

D. E. MONTGOMERY, CONSUMERS' COUNSEL
MARY TAYLOR, EDITOR

The Consumers' Guide is printed with the approval of the Bureau of the Budget as required by Rule 42 of the Joint Committee on Printing. Official free distribution, 150,000 copies per issue. Additional copies may be obtained from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., 5 cents a copy, or by subscription 50 cents a year, domestic; 80 cents a year, foreign. Postage stamps will not be accepted in payment.

"THEY KNEW what they wanted," was the title of a popular play some years ago. It could be the title of a real-life drama that has been enacted out in Decatur, Ill. Decatur's drama might even be titled, "They Knew What They Wanted and Got It."

"They" are the consumers of Decatur and of Macon County, the county in which Decatur is located.

What they wanted and got were Government grades for meat. Three years ago it was impossible to buy Government-graded meat in Decatur. Today 4 meat markets carry graded meat regularly, while 2 sell only Government-graded meat.

How the consumers of Decatur got what they wanted is the plot of the Decatur drama—a drama that has a moral for consumers everywhere.

The situation in Decatur 3 years ago was the situation which now prevails in many American cities. Meat, as always, was relatively expensive; that made it necessary for a housewife to be sure she got what she paid for. There was the problem, too, of comparing prices. "Why," a housewife would ask her butcher, "is the steak here more expensive than a steak at the market down the street?"

"Well," the butcher would say in the jovial way butchers have, "this is better meat, this is real choice meat." You expect a butcher to say that, but a reply like that isn't always reassuring.

Then one day things started happening. A women's club in Decatur had a class in consumer problems, and the instructor of this class went off 3 years ago to attend the annual conference of the American Home Economics Association in Seattle, Wash. One of the speakers at the conference was the Chief Dairy and Food Inspector of Seattle, and he told the conference how Seattle has a compulsory meat-grading ordinance.

All beef, lamb, and mutton sold in Seattle must be Government graded. Meat in Seattle must bear a Government-grade stamp, just as packaged foods throughout the United States must be labeled with the information required in the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

The speaker ticked off the advantage of Government meat grading while the conferee from Decatur listened.

"One," the speaker said, "it protects ethical dealers from unfair practices of their competitors.

"Two, it's possible for consumers to compare the prices of meat of the same quality.

"Three, consumers can shop more economically by buying better grades when better grades are necessary, and by buying the less-expensive grades when they will do.

"Four, meat prices conform more closely to the actual value of meat. The meat grade answers questions about quality without blarney or misrepresentation.

"Five, farmers gain because they get better prices for their better meats, average prices for average meats."

What hit the visiting instructor from Decatur with most force was the fact that meat grades would serve 2 important purposes in Decatur and its surrounding country. Meat is Illinois' third most valuable agricultural product. Meat takes a big chunk out of the consumers' food dollar. Grades would help the consumers of Decatur to shop more efficiently and at the same time would help farmers get fairer prices for one of their most important products.

Back in Decatur after the conference, the instructor lost no time telling consumers about Government meat grades.

The women's club was told about Government grades.

Word went out to the members of the Macon County Home Bureau Units, that is, farm wives in clubs working with the Extension Service.

Homemaking classes conducted by the Parent Teachers Association of Decatur were told about grades.

Down from Chicago came Federal meat graders to explain how meat is actually graded. Speakers came to town from the University of Illinois, under the auspices of Decatur organizations to explain the whys and hows of meat grading.

Out over the air by radio went a program on Government meat grading with a consumer putting questions to an expert brought down from the University of Illinois.

Demonstrations were staged so Decatur consumers could see the need for Government meat grading themselves. Meat cuts were purchased at several markets, for example. Records of the prices paid per pound at each market were kept, and then the meat was graded in front of the consumers. Price, this demonstration revealed, varied with little relationship to quality.

Then, one day, another demonstration was arranged. Arrangements were made for a consignment of Government-graded meat to be delivered to a local store. Unfortunately, the graded meat didn't turn up on time, so the demonstration had to be abandoned. Hopefully, however, it was announced to the assembled consumers that graded meat would be on sale the following day at such and such a store. The result was astounding. Women flocked to the market and bought out the Government-graded meat before the owner of the store could catch his breath.

"If that's the way people feel about Government-graded meat," the butcher said, "then I'm going to sell it."

Other markets soon began to get the idea, too.

Low-income families as yet have not been taking advantage of the Government grades for meat. One reason for this is that the equally nutritious, but less-expensive grades of meat are not being Government graded. The lower grades could be graded, however, for the Department of Agriculture is glad to grade any meat it is asked to grade. Since the grading system is voluntary, however, it is up to consumers to persuade packers to ask for the complete grading service. Grades are just as valuable, more valuable in fact, to families who have to cut corners when they buy food.

The development of Government grades for meat is a story by itself. This story was told in the June 1940 issue of the *Consumers' Guide* in the article "Buying Meat by Grade."

●

OUR THANKS go to the Farm Security Administration for the main illustration on the cover and for the 2 photographs of weavers on pages 3 and 4; and to the Rural Electrification Administration for the photographs on pages 8, 9, and 10.

Homespuns for Farm Homes

Farm Security Administration shows low income families how they can make their own fabrics at minimum cost

WHEN SPRING CAME to South Carolina this year, it brought with it a little pilgrimage of women in search of an art, the art of using their hands and some raw materials from the land to weave a bit of beauty into their plain homes.

There were 17 women, from 8 Southern States. They had come back to school, invited by the Farm Security Administration. They came from communities where FSA has been helping farm families to get a new start in life by lending them money to move from barren land and to resettle on farms and in homes where at least a minimum of the decencies of life are now within reach.

Reason for the invitation was that FSA had set up 2 schools, one for the white women, the other for the Negro women, where they might learn to weave. Heading the schools was a gifted teacher of weaving, lately come from Scandinavia where she had taught women in the folk schools how to make the fabrics they need for personal clothing and to use in the home. School for these women in South Carolina was to last only 8 weeks, but during that time they were to learn not only how to weave but how to instruct others in the practical art when they returned to their home communities.

UNLIKE MANY CREDITORS, WHEN FSA makes loans to distressed farm families it does not leave them to struggle alone with the burden of their debt. Together with the farmer and his wife, it works out what is called a farm and home plan, a plan that provides for making as much as possible of the family living right on the farm. FSA families learn, with the help of home management specialists, how to plan gardens that will produce what the family needs for a balanced diet throughout the year. They learn how to prepare and conserve food. They learn how to make and remake clothes, to put together pieces of furniture. Because cash income at best is meager, many things

which better-fixed families buy at the store must be made at home if FSA families are to have them at all.

That's why weaving is one of the handicrafts FSA farm women are learning these days. It didn't start at the little South Carolina schools, but the instruction which the 17 women received there put new life and fun and skill into the job of making materials for dresses and bedspreads, curtains, and tablecloths.

People who are poor in income sometimes are rich in other things; rich in imagination and talent for using their hands, rich in ingenuity in fashioning something lovely out of something plain. These 17 women showed they had such gifts. What FSA was giving them was the chance to learn new ways to put these talents to work. Most of the women had had little experience in weaving. There was one woman who couldn't even read or write.

MOST FUN CAME IN CREATING NEW DESIGNS. To learn how, their teacher gave each of them a box of water colors. She asked them to take these home and to paint on a sheet of paper their ideas for designs suitable for a curtain, maybe, or dress goods, or a table cover. They talked about their houses: what they were made of, how they were finished inside, how their furniture and rooms were designed, what colors would look best at their windows and on chairs and on tables. Among them, they agreed that since their homes were simple, any materials they made to use in their homes should be simple in design.

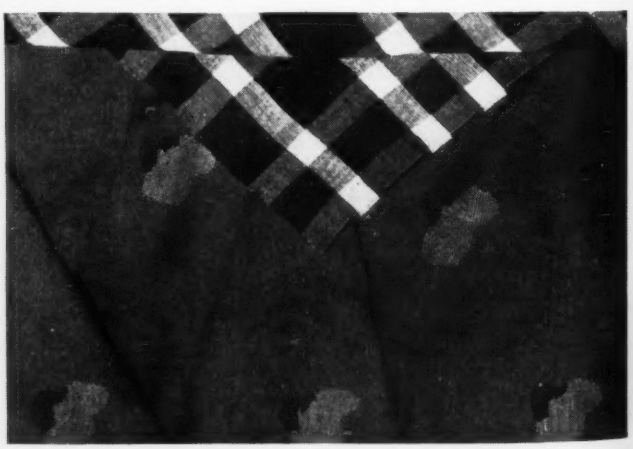
Back in their rooms, each woman struggled with her paint box and brush, trying to translate on to paper pictures of flowers, cotton bolls, birds and trees they were familiar with. Day after day, they would bring them to class, toss them on the table for the teacher to see. No one marked her name on her own design. From these unlabeled drawings the group chose the ones which seemed most attractive. When this vote was made, the women who won the honor of having their drawings selected were asked to tell their names. There was pride in the winning of this recognition.

Out of the collections of designs came stylized sketches of evergreen trees, rhododendron flowers on creamy backgrounds, oak leaves, and acorns. Designs for clothing materials produced patriotic checks and stripes in red, white, and blue; neat herringbone weaves; nobbly, solid-color materials. There were bright bordered designs for towels, table linen; formal stripes and bars for upholstery fabrics. Part of the instruction was learning which design most effectively fitted the purpose to which the fabric was to be put.

IT'S A LONG DISTANCE, AS THESE WOMEN soon learned, between a beautiful picture in one's head or on a piece of paper, and a finished piece of goods. The hardest step of all comes first, the job of acquiring skill in threading looms. Before they had the fun of seeing a pattern unfold beneath their fingers, the women had to master the mysterious techniques of reeling the warp and putting it on the loom to make the variations in pattern. The instructor was stern; every step in the process had to be done without a mistake, for weaving is a craft you can't do "almost right." The job of disciplining untrained fingers and minds to be exact was a tough one. Because it was difficult, it made the reward of accomplishment even greater. Almost a whole week was spent in learning this one operation.

After the warp was ready, weaving the pattern was simple in comparison. Back and

SPARE TIME is put to good use learning the new kind of weaving FSA is introducing throughout the South. At least, that's the opinion of women on FSA projects who are beginning to brighten up simple homes with materials like these. Guided by FSA's alert Home Management Division, they designed and wove fabrics of cotton (left), linen (center), and wool (right). Women have a good time weaving, but they like it even better when they get the results. Already they've found that table and bath linen, curtains, slip covers, spreads, and even rugs can be rolled off their looms at a cost that looks minute next to price tags of similar things in stores. Eventually they may meet costs by selling small surpluses.



forth the shuttles were moved, inch by inch the fabrics grew. Each woman was given a chance to work on each different type of fabric, not just for variety's sake but to give every one the broadest possible training. One woman became so adept she was able, in 6 hours' time, to weave a 6-yard piece of Alice blue tweed, enough to make herself a handsome suit.

During the scant 8 weeks of training they tried over and over again the intricacies of threading their looms to make their patterns exact, of working the cross threads of the weft together without a flaw, until they began to feel confident that they could go back to their projects and show the work to their neighbors.

When school came to an end, all the different types of materials were cut into pieces, so that each scholar would have a large-sized sample to take home with her and show the women there what can be done by fingers deft in weaving.

BECAUSE CASH IS SHORT IN FSA FARM FAMilies, it was important to learn how to use the most economical yarns. Most of the materials woven at the schools were made of cotton. Cotton is abundant; it can be put to many uses; it wears well. Out of the looms came cotton towels, cotton dress goods, cotton curtain materials, cotton upholstery fabrics. Because some FSA families may, in time, be able to grow their own wool and flax, the apt scholars learned how to use these fibers, too. They used yarns already dyed, in the lovely soft rust red color of Carolina soil, the blue of Southern skies, soft spring greens, the purple of thistles.

Careful count was kept of the cost of the yarn, and the cost of each fabric produced.

Locating the most efficient looms to use at the schools wasn't easy. The instructor responsible searched far and wide. She finally found what she wanted in a remote corner of Michigan where an old Swedish craftsman had stuck pretty close to the designs used abroad. His looms were almost entirely of wood—hardwood that would stand up under the pummeling that weavers give their looms; wood which is lighter and easier to handle than steel. All looms were wide enough to produce material 45 inches in width. Some were wide enough for 60-inch fabrics. It cost FSA $75 for each loom bought for the first classes. Now, however, the FSA has blueprints from which the people themselves will be able to make additional looms at a cost of about $15. Looms used at the schools were later sent to FSA communities on loan until the women could find ways of purchasing them.

ALREADY THESE WOMEN ARE BACK AT their homes again, passing along to their own communities the benefit of the training they received at the South Carolina schools.

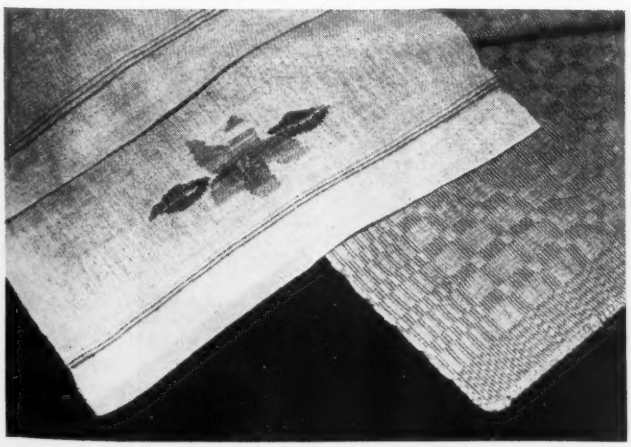
Tygart Valley in West Virginia is one such community. When their neighbor-teacher came back from South Carolina, there were over a dozen women ready and eager to see what she had to show them. They had been doing some weaving in a little roadside shop which had been in existence for 4 years, so they were one up on many of the FSA communities, but they still had much to learn to perfect their talents and products.

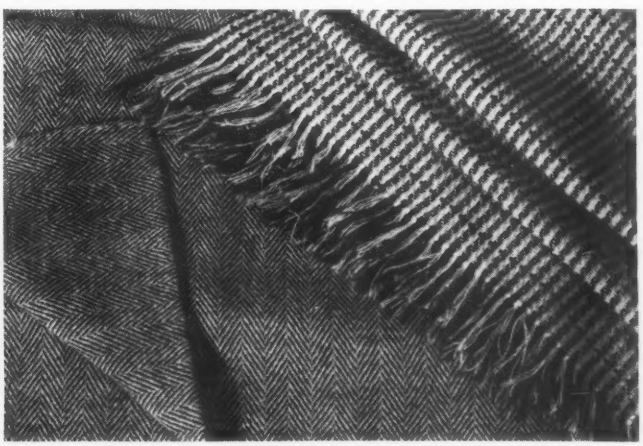
First off, their neighbor showed them the new loom she had used at Orangeburg, S. C. Everyone tried it. Then she showed them her book of patterns. Each page had a patch of material she'd learned to weave. Under each colorful swatch were the directions for setting up looms and weaving the design. Everyone wanted to try new patterns at once, so they decided to work together at designing and weaving curtains for the shop itself.

They looked over the yarns they had on hand, found a good supply of red, white, and blue cotton. It was a perfect selection of materials for a bright checked gingham, which would add the gay blocks of color they needed with their unstained wood walls. When they started out they soon found weaving more unusual patterns was much stiffer work than they were used to. Besides, they'd always had their looms made ready for them. Now they had to do all the preliminary work themselves. Once weaving had begun, they felt more confidence in their ability than they'd ever had. There was a constant hum of conversation about other materials they could make. One woman had an idea for material to cover a chair she'd been hiding for years. Another talked about a Christmas tree design she'd thought of for curtains in a child's room.

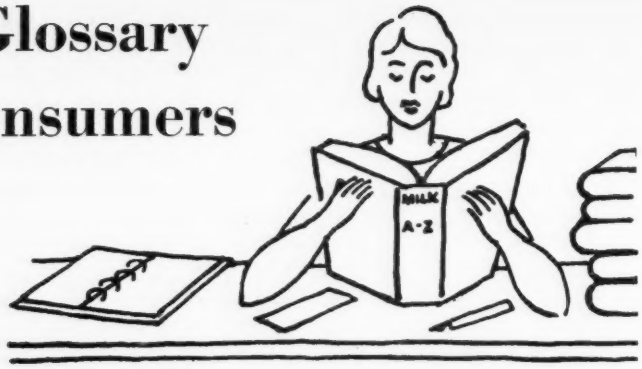
FSA HAS LAID PLANS FOR CLASSES LIKE these on other projects. Already the teacher who supervised the first South Carolina classes is shuttling from project to project getting things started on the right track, guiding beginning weavers over the hard spots. The main objective, everywhere, is for interested women to learn to make the things they need and to make the weaving self-sustaining so it won't be a drain on skimpy incomes.

RAISING THE CASH TO BUY LOOMS AND MAterials, now, would be a hard task on most FSA projects without outside assistance. By securing small co-op loans from FSA, women get a start at weaving. A loan of $200, sufficient to get going, is not too heavy a burden when 20 women share principal and interest payments. Each woman's debt of $10 is spread over 5 years. She must pay back $2 each year plus interest at 3 percent, which amounts to 30 cents the first year, less the following years. With $200 loans, weaving is getting started.





Milk Glossary for Consumers



Words can be made to work when people agree on what they mean. Here is a catalog of some words people use when they talk and think about the only substance which nature has designed solely as food

WELL-ORDERED dictionaries in most languages start with the first letter of the alphabet and run in a decorous manner to its last.

A milk dictionary, being a special sort of thing, has to start with a definition of milk.

Ask an expert what is electricity and he will tell you what electricity does. It produces heat, light, motion. Ask an expert what is milk, and he will tell you not only what milk does, but what it is physically and chemically.

MILK

"Milk is a whitish or yellowish fluid secreted by the mammary glands of female mammals for the nourishment of their young."

Mammary glands are glands in the breasts.

Mammals are animals with backbones who nourish their young with milk.

All of which rather brings you back to the place you started from.

Starting out again, this time with the chemist, we find that all milk, from whatever mammal it comes, contains water, protein, fat, lactose, and ash. That is its chemical content.

Experts have measured the chemical differences that are typical of the milk of various mammals. Here they are:

	Water	Protein	Fat	Lactose	Ash (minerals)
	Percent	*Percent*	*Percent*	*Percent*	*Percent*
Cow's milk . . .	87.17	3.43	3.74	4.94	0.72
Woman's milk .	87.43	1.63	3.75	6.98	0.21
Goat's milk . . .	87.14	3.71	4.09	4.20	0.78
Ewe's milk . . .	82.90	5.44	6.24	4.29	0.85
Mare's milk . .	89.04	2 69	1.59	6.14	0.51
Reindeer's milk.	63.30	10.30	22.46	2.50	1.44

Chemically, reindeer milk is the most concentrated.

Mother's milk has a relatively low protein content, a relatively high lactose content.

Cow and goat milk are similar in chemical composition.

Milks differ importantly, however, apart from their chemical composition.

These differences have to do with the size of the fat globules, and the characteristics of the protein. Both of these factors are important because they affect the digestibility of milk in the infant's stomach.

The protein of cow's milk is largely casein which forms a solid, tough curd in the stomach. Mother's milk on the other hand forms a tender, easily digested curd.

Cow's milk, however, may be partially rectified in this respect by boiling, homogenizing, or by adding either a thin cereal gruel or a gelatin to it.

Evaporated milk is more digestible than some other forms. Dextri-maltose and glucose, forms of sugar, are sometimes added to cow's milk to take the place of lactose.

Nutritionists add these facts: All milk contains varying amounts of vitamins, minerals, sugars, and calories. Some milks have more of each element than do others; some have less. Even the milk from one type of animal is not a standard uniform product. Cow's milk, for example, varies chemically and nutritionally with the breed of cow, its feed, the time of year, and other factors.

Most important of all animal milks in American consumption is cow's milk. Since this glossary is going to be concerned henceforth solely with this kind of milk, its next major definition must be of a—

COW

Cows are the female of the genus *Bos* which belongs to the family *Bovidae*. This means the cow is a ruminant usually with a pair of unbranched hollow horns. A ruminant is an animal which eats its dinner over and over again, or chews its cud.

Raising cows for the production of milk for humans is supposed to be a 10-thousand-year-old practice, though it is by no means universal. In some places it is more advantageous to breed goats, rather than cows, for milk. Selection and breeding of dairy cattle in order to make them more efficient producers of milk is probably 2,000 years old.

Most important breeds of dairy cows in the United States are: Holstein-Friesian, Jersey, Guernsey, Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, and Dutch Belted.

These breeds differ from each other for dairy purposes in the amount of milk they produce, the butterfat content of the milk, the size of the fat globules in the milk, and the color of the milk. Feed and care of dairy cattle also affect milk in these respects but breed is of sufficient importance that considerable emphasis is placed upon it by dairymen.

While milk from different cows of the same breed will vary in quality and quantity, milk produced by the various breeds have the following general characteristics:

Holstein-Friesian: An average butterfat content of 3.4 percent; small fat globules; little color.

Jersey: Average butterfat content of 5.4 percent; large fat globules; richly colored.

Guernsey: An average butterfat content of 4.97 percent; large fat globules; richly colored milk.

Ayrshire: An average butterfat content of 4 percent; relatively small fat globules; little yellow color.

Brown Swiss: An average butterfat con-

tent of 4 percent; medium-sized fat globules; little yellow color.

Dutch Belted: An average butterfat content of 3.9 percent; similar in many respects to Holstein milk.

The average cow begins to produce milk at about the age of 3, and continues to produce until she is about 12 years old. She has a life expectancy of about 16 years, but when her milk production begins to fail with old age, she sometimes ends her allotted span at the butcher's.

The average cow, a statistical abstraction which does not have horns, produced about 2,108 quarts of milk in 1938. That's slightly less than 6 quarts a day. Every day's output, however, doesn't equal every other day's. Cows produce most milk, as a rule, in summer, least in winter. In 1938, the average June production was almost 8 quarts a day; in February, less than 5 quarts a day.

So much for an introduction.

Now to the serious business of defining the words commonly used in our part of the world where cows and humans have dealings with each other.

A

ACIDOPHILUS. A form of buttermilk made from sterilized skim milk by adding a culture of bacteria known as *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. These bacteria, like certain other micro-organisms found in milk, destroy putrefactive bacteria which sometimes occur in the stomach. Lactose—milk sugar, which encourages the growth of this type of bacteria—is also added to the milk sometimes. Usually acidophilus is prescribed by physicians when it is needed.

ADMINISTERED PRICES. When the price of a commodity is determined by free and uncontrolled bargaining among buyers and sellers acting as individuals, the price of the commodity as it is determined in the market is called a free, or competitive, price.

On the other hand when the price of a commodity is fixed by a board or a Government agency, or by the decision of one company or a group of companies controlling a large part of the supplies of that commodity, or by agreement between a substantial number of the buyers and sellers of the commodity, the price arrived at is called an *administered price*.

Free prices usually fluctuate from day to day as supplies are plentiful or scarce, or as buyers are willing and able or unwilling and unable to make purchases.

Administered prices tend to remain at the same level until a decision by the agency fixing the prices is made to alter them.

Milk is a commodity whose price is sometimes administered. When the price of milk is fixed by administrative decisions, consumers should have a hand in determining the decision.

Where milk prices are administered by private companies, there are no public hearings, but here consumers can make their opinions heard by bargaining as a group with the agency which fixes milk prices. Where the administered price is set by a Government agency, public hearings are usually held to secure evidence upon which to base decisions. Consumers may influence these decisions by taking an active part at milk hearings.

ADMINISTRATOR, MARKET. (See Agreement, Marketing.)

AGREEMENT, MARKETING.

Under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937, the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized under certain circumstances to enter into marketing agreements with the producers and handlers of various foods, including milk, and to issue market orders.

Marketing agreements and orders may be issued only in cities that obtain a substantial part of their milk supply from across State boundaries.

A marketing agreement is a contract under which handlers agree to pay producers for their milk according to a fixed schedule of prices. It is issued after the Secretary of Agriculture, on request, has called a hearing and has ruled, on the basis of evidence received, that such an agreement is desirable.

It provides also for a method of payment and for a market administrator, selected by the Secretary of Agriculture.

When the terms of a marketing agreement are accepted by at least two-thirds of the producers and a majority of the handlers in a particular milk market, its terms may be set forth in a marketing order, issued by the Secretary of Agriculture. This marketing order makes the terms of the agreement apply to all handlers in the milk shed, whether or not they originally subscribed to the agreement.

If two-thirds or more of the producers, but less than half of the handlers, accept the marketing agreement, a marketing order may be put into effect by the Secretary if approved by the President of the United States.

Marketing agreements and orders fix the minimum price paid for milk by handlers to producers. They do not establish retail prices of milk. However, since the price received by producers has large importance in the eventual retail price, consumers are vitally affected by marketing agreements and orders.

For this reason, the vital stake consumers have in the actions of the Surplus Marketing Administration has been recognized by the creation of the office of Consumers' Counsel. It is the function of this officer to represent consumers at hearings prior to the issuance of a marketing agreement or order, to notify consumers of the hearings, to cooperate with consumers who wish to appear at hearings, to present evidence in their own behalf, and to publish information designed to educate consumers to an understanding of the problems that affect their purchase and use of milk (and other farm products).

B

BABCOCK TEST. A method of determining the amount of butterfat contained in milk.

BACTERIA. Minute living cells are found almost everywhere in nature. Those found in milk are of two kinds: The kind that causes disease, and the kind that doesn't. They may or may not contain coloring matter.

Bacteria are one of the lowest forms of micro-organic plant life. A cubic centimeter of milk may contain billions of bacteria.

Since bacteria are living forms, they require a particular kind of environment in which to thrive. In general, they need food, warmth, water, and air. Milk, since it contains all these elements, is a favorable environment for bacteria. Some temperatures encourage their growth; others may either check or destroy them altogether. Usually bacteria can continue to live at low temperatures, but are not able to multiply. Refrigeration of milk consequently serves to prevent their multiplication though it does not destroy them.

At medium temperatures, between 50 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit, bacteria in milk may thrive. Temperatures above 142 degrees usually retard their growth or destroy them. Practically all of the known bacteria which produce disease are destroyed at temperatures over 142 degrees, provided the milk is held at this temperature for 30 minutes.

[Concluded on page 15]

Self-help Cooperatives Turn the Trick

Low income farmers find how these cooperatives can cut the costs of electricity by giving them a chance to help build their own lines

DO YOU START the day by going to an outdoor pump to splash some water on your face, and end your day as soon as the sun sets because your eyes can't take it when you try to read by oil lamp or candlelight?

Such a life probably sounds as remote to you as Abraham Lincoln's boyhood if you live in a city. To thousands of farm families, it's all in the day's work. Even in June 1940, only 1 out of every 4 farm families could boast electric service from central power stations. (This does not count the farms producing their own electricity.) Five years before, only 1 out of every 10 families was lucky enough to be able to flip electric switches in his home, to start the power flowing from central stations. Government, through the Rural Electrification Administration, can take most of the credit for this advance.

Because rural electrification means better diets for farm families (electric refrigeration), better education for rural children (study lights at school and home), better health on farms (electric pumps provide improved sanitary systems), less drudgery for farm wives (electric washing machines, stoves, water heaters, vacuum cleaners), and equally important, more-advanced farming methods (electric brooders, lighted barns, and such), REA was created 5 years ago to finance the construction of electric distribution systems in previously unserved rural areas. The great bulk of its loans has gone to farmers' cooperatives. Their purpose is to provide light and power at a price farm families can afford.

Though co-ops receive REA loans covering their system's entire cost, there are many farm regions where bringing power lines right to the farmer's door still won't make it possible for him to wire his house for lighting. REA has found many families with incomes below $300 who can't begin to meet the average wiring cost of $75. As REA expands, electrifying these low-income farm homes is becoming REA's chief problem. To help solve it, farmers are setting up self-help co-ops. They help low-income farmers find the cash for wiring and appliances by giving them a chance to help build their own farm lines.

So far, just a handful of self-help co-ops have got started, but there's plenty of evidence on hand to show how they shave expenses.

SOME MINNESOTA FARMERS WENT TO SEE an REA representative about starting a co-op and told him their situation. There weren't very many of them and their farmhouses weren't exactly on top of each other—2 factors which make most rural electrification expensive. Just the same, they needed electricity badly. As one of them said: "It's one thing to read about new kinds of farming and another thing to be able to get the kind of machinery to try it out. We can't go much further till we get power." The REA representative grasped their problem, but he had to tell them that borrowing from REA to build a system in the usual way would be a drain on their future incomes which the gains of electricity couldn't possibly make up. He suggested that they all wrack their brains for ways to build a system they could afford. To start the ball rolling, he outlined the principal features of a self-help co-op.

A self-help co-op gets started like any other. Members come together and sign themselves up. They agree to use electricity when it comes through. They agree to pay the small membership fee (usually $5) which entitles them to one vote per family, and they agree to pay their electric bills, cash on the nose, each month. When organizers of a self-help co-op have a list of potential consumers for their electric cooperative, they can begin to plan how much money they can

spend on their system. When they know what their budget is they can start figuring out economies.

PRINCIPAL ECONOMY FOR MEMBERS OF SELF-help co-ops is the one designed to give them an opportunity to earn extra cash for wiring and applicances. To give members this chance, the self-help cooperative makes a special kind of contract with the company which gets the job to build the system.

As in other REA co-ops, bidding is open and the contract is let to the lowest bidder. In the self-help co-ops, however, the bidder must agree to use REA co-op farmers to do all the unskilled labor on the system, to pay them at the prevailing wage rate, until they earn $30 each, and to let them work toward a second $30 if there is further work to be done. On the other hand, REA members agree to turn the checks they get from contractors over to the local cooperative to be applied toward the cost of wiring their farms and the purchase of electrical equipment they want.

To 750 Minnesota farmers this plan sounded good. They figured on building their 250-mile system so their work would come during a slack farm season. They looked for ways to cut costs of the system itself. Before bids were let they did a lot of corner cutting. Biggest economy was in paring costs of poles. When they found good poles would cost $7.50 apiece, they had to think twice before putting that item in the budget. One wise farmer, looking over his land one day, noticed a good stand of sturdy, straight cedars, said to himself, "Darned if we all haven't a good lot of cedar. It ought to make good poles." The idea sounded fair to everyone, including REA representatives. The only drawback was the problem of processing the trees to preserve them. They wanted to be sure the cost of creosoting wouldn't swallow up their savings.

When one farmer remembered a deserted creosoting plant near his place, this worry disappeared. For $1,200 the plant was theirs. The whole deal brought the cost of poles down $5 each, to $2.50 apiece. Farmers who supplied the poles collected cash for their trees which meant added money for wiring and appliances. When a local lumber dealer, inspired by the farmers' success, bought the creosoting plant from them for $1,300 they got a cash windfall which made their poles even cheaper. This economy and others which were planned and written into

specifications for contracts sliced about $100 off the $900 per mile cost of REA systems in this densely wooded area where line building runs high.

Ninety-five percent of the members of the Minnesota self-help co-op agreed to wire their houses before the contract was let for the system. Self-help made it possible. Members who wanted to were able to earn at least $30 toward wiring costs. By planning to purchase wiring material and appliances for everyone at the same time, the co-op was able to cut equipment costs to the bone. Minnesota farmers will pay $1.50 for each outlet, as compared with the $2.50 or $3 cost elsewhere.

Group purchasing will save farmers on appliances, too. In Minnesota, they have already signed up for $42,000 worth of electric refrigerators, irons, and other equipment. Buying for all members in one order will save these farmers from 20 to 35 percent.

COOPERATION means taking active part in the affairs of your co-op. Each household has one vote on co-op policies. REA self-help co-op members put heads together to figure out ways of making power lines cost less. To cut cash outlay they learn to do their own wiring. Buying all members' supplies and appliances at once saves, too.

SELF-HELP PROJECTS ARE UNDER CONstruction in 6 States. Though ways of economizing on the system itself vary in different localities in each instance, members work at digging holes, setting poles, and clearing way for lines. When the $30 or more earned this way doesn't meet the cost for wiring and appliances, REA has additional schemes up its sleeve for showing low-income farmers how to help themselves to light and power. On some self-help systems farmers themselves are becoming electricians. Teachers are supplied by Agriculture's Extension Service or by REA. To insure safe wiring, and to guard against fire and shock dangers all homemade wiring has to be passed upon by an inspector. This inspector, who has no connection with the REA co-op, must be approved by the REA and the county fire marshal.

Home wiring saves farmers the cost of hiring outsiders to do the work. It can reduce the cost of wiring to a fraction of the usual $75 or more. Wiring comes still

cheaper with the group purchase of wiring materials.

BEFORE PROJECTS ARE STARTED, FARMERS are queried to find out which ones are going to wire their homes, and which ones are going to buy what kind of appliances. When the co-op knows how much wiring equipment is needed, how many refrigerators, washing machines, and other appliances are wanted, it asks for bids on the whole lot, then buys from the lowest bidder. Chiefly, co-ops try to get what they need at the lowest possible cost. On a number of items they may obtain from REA specifications for equipment and appliances, the use of which can enable farm families to get more for their money. Increasingly, REA is concerning itself with the problem of helping farm families to get the best buy for their money in the group purchase of these materials. Savings as high as 40 percent are reported.

Self-help co-ops bring farmers electricity at minimum cost. Where farms are scattered and prospects of profit are too small to interest private companies, a co-op frequently provides the only hope of escape from primitive pre-electrical conditions. Loans obtained from REA to build systems may cover the entire cost for a power co-op. Interest rates are low (varying from year to year; 2.46 percent for fiscal year 1941; to date, under 3 percent). Interest payments don't start till 30 months after the first advance of loan funds. Repayment of principal doesn't reach its maximum for 7 years after the date of the note. Then co-ops have 18 years more to finish repaying loans.

Like any lender of money, REA has to be sure that its loans will be paid back. To check on loan applications, REA sends examiners to ferret out these facts: How many farm families live in the area to be served by the proposed system? Is the average farm income high enough to support the system, and make it earn enough to repay the loans?

When these questions are satisfactorily answered, the next step is to see that a true cooperative is established to carry out the plans for construction and management which members and REA agree upon. The co-op must admit to membership all farmers, and others, who will use the system. Each family must pay the same small membership fee. Each member is allowed only one vote. The loan bears a fixed rate of interest. If any "profits" are made, as in all true co-ops they must stay in the co-op and be used for the benefit of all the co-op members. Usually this has meant paying in advance on the Government loan, so that the cooperative may enter earlier into full ownership of its electric system. Education in cooperation is developed.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR SEEING THAT THESE foundations of cooperation are well laid rests with the co-op's board of directors. The board is elected from the members by the members to oversee the work of the co-op and to determine the policies which govern it. The directors should be men and women elected because of their ability and their devotion to the community. They should be persons who are not in a position to make money on the REA co-op directly or indirectly through business connections.

Carrying out the policies which the members and the board establish is put in the hands of a paid manager. He should be able to make construction and management run smoothly from beginning to end.

Potential REA borrowers who want to get a rough idea of what systems cost, how much they'll have to pay, can use these figures for a start. Average REA systems cover 340 miles, have 825 users, cost $750 per mile, compared with the $1,500 or $2,000 private utilities used to count on. Rates on REA-financed systems are set at a level substantially below former rural levels. Nevertheless all costs, including purchase of power, operating expenses, and interest and amortization charges are provided for. Because interest rates are low and initial cost of lines well under those of private utilities, electric rates for co-op members compare favorably with average rates charged American families who plug in on private utility current.

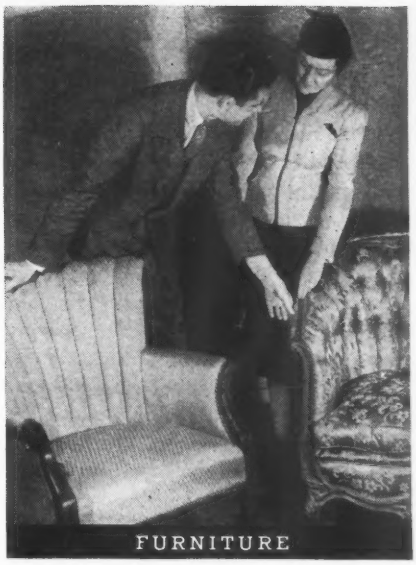
REA HAS PLENTY OF REPORTS TO SHOW that electricity makes for better farming. They tell how farmers have boosted incomes by installing electricity in homes and farm buildings. Farmers who light their hen houses find that egg production increases. Electric brooders mean fewer chicks are lost. Electric refrigerators mean less waste from food spoilage. Radios bring market news, weather reports, crop forecasts to the farm home, all of which make the business of farming more efficient.

Ways of using electricity to make farming more profitable are needed most by low-income farmers. Many of them can't afford electricity yet, even with REA's help. But REA is now trying to reach lines out to them. As time goes on *Consumers' Guide* will report further progress made on lowering costs of line construction, on reducing the cost of wiring and appliances, and on the big job of getting electricity for every farm family.

CONSTRUCTION WORK on their own electric system gives these members of an REA self-help co-op a chance to help themselves to electricity. They clear the way for lines, dig holes, set poles, earning $30 or more to help pay for the wiring and appliances which will put electricity to work for them.

Buy Furniture With Care

That goes for anything you buy for the family, but articles that require large capital outlay need special care in selecting. Labels tell little, so the wise consumer learns the points to look for before he invests


FURNITURE

"IT'S SOLID!"

"See—it doesn't wobble!"

"Look at the beautiful finish!"

"This will fit into any kind of home!"

"If it doesn't last you for at least 10 years, come back and we'll give you a new one!"

"What? . . . How many springs are there in the cushion? . . . You want to know whether those are mortise and tenon joints? How do we know those nails are going to to hold? . . . Why, lady—you amaze me!"

Label that bit of monolog as a "Conversation Between a Furniture Salesman and the Customer-Who-Knew-What-She-Wanted." Then tack a middle and a happy ending to it and you have the tale of the furniture buyer who knew there was something else in judging a furniture piece besides giving it a gentle shake, patting its sides and surface, then looking sideways at the price tag before making up her mind.

Labels on furniture sometimes give facts about construction, as well as style and price. Laws of some States require labels to tell the kind and amount of stuffing of upholstered pieces. But furniture labels rarely—if ever—set down in 1–2–3 sequence the kinds of joints used in making a piece, the dimensions of the piece, facts about finish, such information as the number of springs and the kind of webbing of upholstered articles, and a declaration as to whether glue, screws, or nails were used for reinforcement.

LIKEWISE, NO ONE HAS ESTABLISHED A–B–C quality standards for furniture: Standards that take into account not only the wood used in the manufacture of the furniture, but also the type of construction, the fabric, and the workmanship. It isn't easy to define the qualities that make for sturdy construction.

One feature of furniture has had a standard worked out for it; that is a standardized measurement of size. Of course, getting the size you want is not the simple matter of asking for the standard size. You should try out different pieces till you get the one that suits you best. Generally, however, furniture that meets the demands of the person 5 feet 8 inches tall will be comfortable for the majority. For the extremely tall or extremely short person, odd sizes can be purchased.

Chairs—that is, all chairs for grown-ups—should be about 18 inches from floor to seat bottom. Depth of the chair—from front to rear—should be about 19 inches. This can be stretched to 24 inches in the case of the heavily cushioned chair. A slight downward slant from front to back of about three-eighths of an inch adds to the comfort. Back of the chair should be 17 to 19 inches from seat to top, and should have a "rake" of 4 inches—"rake" being the distance from the rear of the seat to the point where the back curves outward the furthest. Chair arms 7 inches above the seat will suit most people.

CONSIDER THE PERSON WHO IS GOING TO use the chair most before you buy. If he is the "lounging type," then he wants something he can slide down into; if he sits stiff and erect, he wants a more formal chair.

Desk tops for writing should be about 30 to 31 inches from the floor; for typing, about 24 inches. Kitchen and dining room tables can be 33 or 35 inches high. End tables serve most needs when they are 25 inches high.

Furniture pieces built closer than 6 inches to the floor—unless they rest full-flush on the floor—will inevitably be dust and dirt collectors.

Make certain that the piece of furniture is rigid and solid. Wobble the piece on a smooth wood floor. If it yields to your wobbling, and doesn't feel firmly constructed, pass it up. If it sits firmly, you give it a passing grade.

Getting beneath the surface of the furniture is not as simple as determining its comfort and general solidity. You can ask the salesman some questions, and if he is well posted, he may know the answers. Better still, you might ask him to specify on the bill of sale the kinds of joints used in the construction of the piece, the number of springs in an upholstered chair, the kind of webbing, places where there might be nails or glue without reinforcements, kinds of woods in the frame, and the kind of finish. Then if you have cause for complaint later on, you will have no problem in refreshing the salesman's memory. If the salesman doesn't know, you might ask the furniture buyer of the store for the facts you want.

Some stores have factory samples on the floor showing how the furniture looks in cross-section, so that you can tell for yourself how the piece is made once you know what to look for.

Framework of all furniture has joints where legs, arms, body, and reinforcements are fastened together. In the very lowest grades of furniture those joints will be merely nailed together, with perhaps a dab of glue put on to keep the piece in place. That sort of construction is worthless.

Then you will find pieces secured only with screws. This construction is a distinct improvement over nails, but still represents a definite risk, no matter at what price you buy it.

THERE ARE 2 KINDS OF JOINTS WHICH really meet most standards of good furniture construction. The first kind is the mortise and tenon.

Place the knuckle of the middle finger of your right hand between the knuckles of the

third and fourth fingers of your left hand and you have the simplest picture of a mortise and tenon joint. In the case of furniture the "knuckle" to be inserted is shaped from the rung or leg that is being joined to another part of the frame in which a hole has been drilled. If the joint fits perfectly, and if a proper glue is used, then the chances of the joint giving way are slim.

The second kind of well-constructed joint is called the dowel. The dowel is nothing more than a wooden peg used to join two pieces of wood together which have previously been drilled with openings the exact size of the peg. Both the holes and dowels are swabbed with glue, and the dowel inserted. It is extremely important that the dowels be of well-seasoned wood and fit tight to avoid shrinkage; otherwise, the joint will become loose. The best kind of dowel has spiral and longitudinal grooves cut into it to reinforce its hold. Steel dowels—which are a kind of over-sized nail—should be avoided.

"Doubled-dowel" construction simply means that 2 dowels instead of one have been placed on either side of a joint, thus strengthening the joint. It is always to be preferred to the single-dowel type.

There are 2 schools of thought on this feature of a piece of furniture, one favoring the dowel construction, the other the mortise and tenon. Both types, properly used, mean good workmanship in furniture, and in a well-made piece you often find them used in combination. Sometimes screws are used to reinforce them, in which case the screws do not mean cheapened construction.

ASK THE SALESMAN TO TURN THE PIECE you are considering upside down. Then look for corner blocks, which are nothing more than small triangular-shaped pieces of wood placed at the joint for reinforcement. Badly made furniture may lack corner blocks altogether or else have them glued or nailed to the piece in haphazard fashion. You want corner blocks notched to fit the joint and attached with screws. Grain of the corner blocks should run diagonal to that of the wood they reinforce. In some chairs—notably the bentwood types—lack of corner blocks is not a sign of inferior construction since they would be impractical to use.

Type of glue used in the joints is almost impossible to determine. But there are good glues—and bad ones. Best glue is a new type of adhesive that goes under the chemical name of phenolic-resin, which is really a generic name for a group of related glues. Heat-resistant and water-resistant, these are among the strongest glues used in furniture making. Expensive, they are not used in low-cost pieces. Animal casein glues—made from milk—and vegetable glues—made from starch—are also commonly used in furniture. Both rate high, but animal casein glues are more resistant to water.

One way to spot bad workmanship is to notice whether glue has oozed out along joints or corner blocks and dried in a brittle mass that flakes off under your fingernail. That means not only sloppy construction but also a poor quality glue.

Likewise, you're taking chances with a piece whose joints are not compactly set or where small cavities in the joint betray a poor glueing job.

WITH THE DESK OR TABLE OR SOFA TIPPED on end, that is the time to examine bottom surfaces to see that they are sanded smooth, not rough and splintery, and are shellacked or similarly finished. This is the time, also, to look for nails, poorly glued joints, and split panels where screws have not been properly inserted. Notice the grain of the legs of chairs and tables. If it does not run vertically, following the longitudinal axis of the leg, but runs diagonally, it may mean future trouble due to breaking across the grain.

Now turn the piece right-side up.

If the piece has drawers in it, pull them out and see for yourself if they slide smoothly and are not loose. The groove rail of the drawer, on which the drawer slides back and forth, should be glued or otherwise fastened securely to the framework. Slides, whether on both sides of the drawer or in the center, likewise should be securely fastened to both the front and back of the drawer.

Dove-tail joints, used for notching together the sides of the drawer, should fit snugly and firmly. Good-quality furniture has this type of joint on all four corners of the drawer; cheaper pieces may simply have slots in which the sides and back of the drawer are fitted. Tiny blocks of wood glued to the bottom of the drawer, where it fits into the sides, make for reinforcement and strength. If the back of the drawer falls below the bottom of the drawer floor, it indicates good workmanship.

WHEN YOU PULL OUT THE DRAWERS, look for a panel shelf that is at least three-sixteenths of an inch thick separating each drawer. Furniture lacking this insert will not be dustproof.

Like drawers, doors should fit snugly, should open and close smoothly, should not sag. Hinges, brackets, latches made from thin, stamped-out metal mean weak construction that will not long stand the strain of ordinary wear.

Table leaves also should fit perfectly, with not even a fraction of an inch looseness. Don't store them in damp places, such as your cellar; if you do, you will soon have warped, useless furniture on your hands.

What holds for the framework of simple wooden furniture holds for the frames of upholstered pieces. But your troubles become many-fold more complicated when you look for quality in an upholstered piece.

To know the anatomy of an upholstered chair or sofa, you examine the cross-section bottom-side-up. Many stores have samples in their showrooms already slit open so you can see their innards.

First there is the undercovering, which is nothing more than a plain piece of cloth tacked on to the bottom to cover webbing, springs, and stuffing.

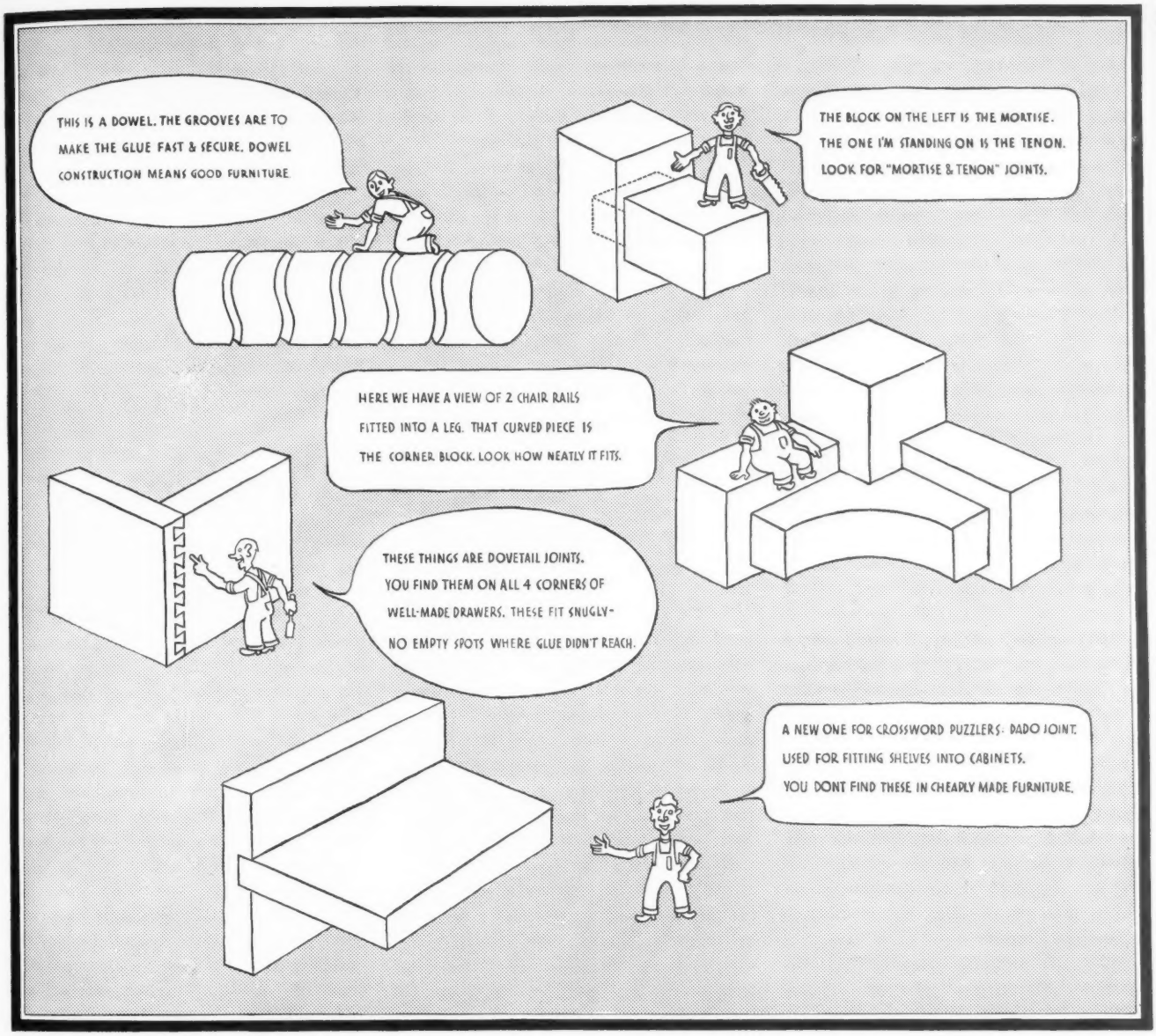
Rip that off and you find the webbing. Job of the webbing is to support and reinforce the springs. Best webbing is firm, closely woven, strong. It should be at least 3¼ inches wide. Finest grades usually have a red stripe near the edge, cheaper grades a blue or black stripe. Those are grade designations familiar to the trade but seldom explained to consumers. The strips of webbing are interwoven with each other, and the edges are securely tacked to the frame. You can spot cheap construction by wide spaces between webbing, and by loose, sleazy fabric. Better grades will have from a third to a half more webbing strips than cheap grades.

THERE ARE THREE SUBSTITUTES USED ON lower-cost chairs for fabric webbing. All of them are weaker than webbing or subtract from the comfort of the chair or sofa.

So-called "sagless" construction is nothing more than a covering of heavy jute material stretched across the bottom of the chair and fastened to the frame by tiny springs. "Supersagless" construction is the same thing with the addition of two heavy metal wires stretched beneath the jute to lend support.

Wires or flat steel bands may be used in place of webbing. Found only in lowest-quality furniture, these may soon bend out of shape, causing the chair to sag. The better quality wires or bands may retain their shape, but result in a less-comfortable chair, and are always used with less-resilient springs.

Wooden slats are sometimes used because of their strength, but they give you a chair with less resiliency and comfort.


THIS IS A DOWEL. THE GROOVES ARE TO MAKE THE GLUE FAST & SECURE. DOWEL CONSTRUCTION MEANS GOOD FURNITURE.
THE BLOCK ON THE LEFT IS THE MORTISE. THE ONE I'M STANDING ON IS THE TENON. LOOK FOR "MORTISE & TENON" JOINTS.
HERE WE HAVE A VIEW OF 2 CHAIR RAILS FITTED INTO A LEG. THAT CURVED PIECE IS THE CORNER BLOCK. LOOK HOW NEATLY IT FITS.
THESE THINGS ARE DOVETAIL JOINTS. YOU FIND THEM ON ALL 4 CORNERS OF WELL-MADE DRAWERS. THESE FIT SNUGLY- NO EMPTY SPOTS WHERE GLUE DIDN'T REACH.
A NEW ONE FOR CROSSWORD PUZZLERS- DADO JOINT. USED FOR FITTING SHELVES INTO CABINETS. YOU DONT FIND THESE IN CHEAPLY MADE FURNITURE.

Next come the springs. The larger springs are, the greater the resiliency and comfort of the chair. Double-cone springs are better than single-cone. Experts say 9 to 12 double-cone springs should be counted on the bottom of an ordinary good quality chair, 16 or more if the chair is very large. The springs should be close enough to prevent sagging or hollows developing in the chair with use, yet not so close as to touch or lock when someone sits in the chair.

Secret of the efficiency of springs is the way in which they are fastened to the frame. Strong hemp twine should be used to fasten each spring to the back and front of the frame. Wire is second-best, but better than bad-quality twine.

Poor-quality furniture has only 3 or 4 strings fastening each spring to the frame, usually placed at front, back, and either side. Better service is had when each spring has eight separate knots which support it diagonally as well as on the 4 opposite sides. The knots should be neither too loose nor too tight. A good test is to press down the springs and see whether they resume their normal position as one unit, instead of one spring being depressed farther down or returning to a lower position than the others.

As you dig deeper into the chair, you next find on top of the springs a layer of burlap or heavy cotton fabric, which in good furniture is sewed to the springs. Best-quality burlap is 10- and 12-ounce, poorer quality the 8-ounce grade.

Then comes the stuffing—put in 2 separate layers on high-grade pieces.

There are any number of stuffings, and in some States consumers find the kind and percentage of each is stated on the label because the law says those facts must be there. That's to prevent consumers from getting insanitary or used filling. Stuffing should be quilted or sewed to the burlap underlining to prevent its shifting and massing in one spot of the chair.

Best-quality furniture has stuffing of long, curled horsehair; medium grades have Spanish moss, or cheaper grades of cattle hair, or a combination of moss and hair; in the lowest grades are palm-leaf fiber, sisal, coco fiber, tow, and excelsior. The fillings rank in about that order for resilience, comfort, and wearing qualities.

Finally, there is the padding to give form and shape to the piece and to prevent springs

or frame from breaking through the upholstery fabric. Firm rolls of cotton felt, attached to the frame, are best. Padding of lumpy cotton or twisted paper soon loses shape, makes the chair uncomfortable.

A muslin cover beneath the upholstery fabric is a sign of quality. *Consumers' Guide* for December 5, 1938 (Vol. V, No. 13), tells how to select upholstery fabrics.

If you like cushions with springs, follow the same rules for judging quality in them as judging the springs underneath the cushion.

Cushions with filling should first of all have a downproof ticking. The label should tell you what the filling is. Best grades have 75 percent goose down and 25 percent small goose feathers. Cushions 100 percent down don't have as much body as the mixture.

Duck, chicken, and turkey feathers are found in medium-grade furniture. They rank in that order for softness and durability. Kapok, cotton, and cotton linters go into the lowest-grade pieces. Often these tend to lump or to become powdery.

FINISH OF ALL WOODEN EXPOSED PARTS of the furniture should be smooth, free from rough spots, and unless intended to simulate a special design, clear enough so as not to hide the natural grain of the wood. Try this test to judge the quality of the finish: Scratch a small unexposed part of the finish with your fingernail. If a white mark is left on the finish, it indicates a cheap, inferior product that is brittle. Rub part of the finish with your thumb for several seconds until the coating gets warm. Cheap finish will turn to powder or become sticky under the test.

What you will get out of furniture depends to some extent on what care you put into it. A few general hints: Dust furniture daily and polish or wax it often. Don't place fine woods near radiators, open windows, or in direct sunlight. Keep extension leaves in a cool, dry place. Use asbestos or other hot-dish pads on table and server tops to protect them against damage from heat. That holds even for finishes said to be moisture- and heat-proof. Call in a professional repairman if wood cracks, or if joints become loose.

SPECIFICALLY, USE SOFT CHEESECLOTHS, or any other kind of soft cloth for dusting. Don't use an old, dirty cloth, and don't use one that leaves lint. Wash furniture with "green soap," a vaseline-like cleanser sold in most drug stores. Put a teaspoonful of it on a soft cloth soaked in hot water, and rub it on the polished surface until heavy lather is worked up. Then take another cloth dampened in tepid water, wipe the surface clean, completing the job by wiping it a second time with a soft dry cloth. Always rub the wood with the grain. White soap that is pure and neutral will do the job just as well, but be sure it is not an alkali soap.

If highly polished furniture becomes "foggy" make a mixture of a quart of clear water and a tablespoon of vinegar and apply it to the surface, being sure to rub with the grain.

White spots on furniture that has been finished with shellac may sometimes be removed by rubbing lightly with a soft cloth moistened with denatured alcohol diluted half and half with water, but alcohol should be used with care to avoid cutting through the shellac coating. If the finish on the furniture is varnish, white spots can usually be removed by rubbing lightly with a piece of flannel dampened with essence of peppermint or spirits of camphor, followed after a few minutes with an application of furniture polish.

Scratches usually must be repaired by a specialist. But if you are artistically inclined, you can do the job yourself by applying a tint slightly lighter than the wood to the scratch, being careful not to overdo the application. Then fill in the scratch with white shellac, using a white camel's hair brush. Use light, delicate strokes to avoid leaving a lump on the finish.

Pineapple Parable

"LUNCH FOR NINETEEN, please, and I'd like to talk to the chef about the dessert."

To the kitchen staff of a large New York hotel the luncheon order that followed must have sounded slightly odd. Dessert, they were told, was to be 2 slices of canned pineapple, each served in a different colored dish. Great care was to be taken in preparing this so that the luncheon guests were to be served one slice from one brand of pineapple, one slice from another, both specified by the man who ordered the luncheon.

In due course the 19 guests assembled. It turned out that they were not to eat alone, but their hosts were members of a marketing association. They were not ordinary luncheon guests. All 19 of them were handpicked housewives supposedly representative of their income group. All in all it was to be a gay party, because topping off the meal was to be a consumer quiz at which the consumer I. Q. of these especially invited guests was to be exposed to the critical view of their 200 hosts.

QUESTIONS CAME HARD AND FAST TO THE 19 guests. How many of them had read this or that book on consumer problems? How many of them knew about the *Consumers' Guide?* Confronted with three pairs of stockings, they were asked to state which of the three they preferred. The informatively labeled pair with no brand name, the brand product without the label, and a pair completely devoid of any identification. A similar set of questions had to do with canned beans. There were questions about advertising, and other consumer problems.

Came time for the dessert, and the waiters marched out with the double set of dishes for each diner. "Eat both pieces of the sliced pineapple just as you would eat any dessert," the 19 guests were requested, "but please remember which colored dish each of the slices came from." They ate the dessert and when they were through each housewife was asked to vote on which slice of pineapple tasted better, identifying her choice by the color of the dish the slice came from. Sixteen voted for one kind, 3 for the other kind. Of course, none of them knew which brand was which. It was a sort of consumer blindfold test.

ANNOUNCING THE RESULT OF THE DESsert course, the person responsible for the contest said 16 of the women had voted for a Grade "B" product, 3 of them for a Grade "A" product.

Now that was news. It was news for the reporters who sat in on the luncheon, and it was news for the Department of Agriculture.

One reporter, for example, had this to say: "The assembly burst into hearty laughs on being informed that when unbranded slices of pineapple in separate dishes, carefully checked as to contents, were served to the women, 16 of the 19 had preferred the Grade B, by Government standards, to the Grade A." That was important enough to go into the newspaper headline, which reported the affair this way: "Sixteen Pick a Grade B Pineapple Over U. S. Grade A."

To the Department of Agriculture, this news was even more startling. It was startling because *no U. S. grades for pineapple have ever been developed, either in their tentative or permanent form.*

OFF TO THE DIRECTOR OF SALES RESEARCH of a large food company, who staged the pineapple contest, went a letter from the Department, saying in part: "We would be keenly interested in having any explanation you may have to offer in connection with this rather unfortunate incident which upon the face of it reflects unfavorably upon Government grades, but when the facts are known, does not."

From this gentleman came a letter in return telling "How chagrined I am over my ignorance of the fact that no official grades have ever been established for pineapple. I thought they had, and the whole misunderstanding arose from that ignorance, for which, of course, I am solely responsible . . ."

THE NEWSPAPER HAS BEEN ASKED TO correct the misstatement of fact as a reassurance to consumers whose belief in Government grades may have been undermined by the item. Meanwhile, consumers, canners, and trade editors who queried the Department of Agriculture about the incident have been set right.

The kind of pineapple the women preferred sells at a lower price than the other kind. Perhaps there's a moral in that.

MILK GLOSSARY FOR CONSUMERS

(Concluded from page 7)

Bacteria produce various effects. The souring of milk is a result of the presence of the lactic acid bacteria. These are good bacteria; they help in the digestion of food. Physicians sometimes put them to work for reasons of health by prescribing milk for patients which has been treated with cultures of these bacteria.

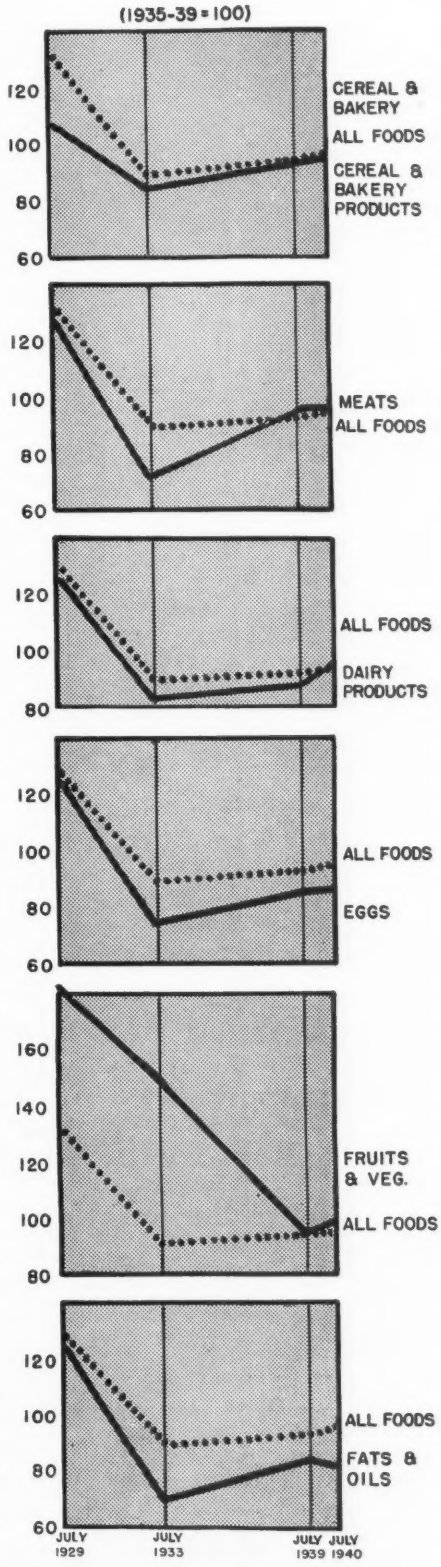
Other varieties are necessary in butter manufacture and induce the changes which result in butter flavor; still others ferment milk, while others bring about color changes in milk.

Bacteria in milk may also produce disease, notably tuberculosis, septic sore throat, undulant fever, certain intestinal disturbances, diphtheria, and scarlet fever. Fortunately, these bacteria succumb to proper pasteurization.

Disease-bearing bacteria get into milk from diseased cows, from dirt on the cow, from dirty barns, careless handling, and diseased handlers.

Regulations looking toward pure milk, therefore, not only provide for pasteurization which kills harmful bacteria, and refrigeration which retards the growth of bacteria, but also protect the health of cows and the sanitary handling of milk, which greatly reduces the opportunities for infection.

A PERSPECTIVE



FOOD COSTS. Retail food costs declined from June to July, checking the upswing which has been underway since early this year. This decline, as well as the earlier increase, was mainly the result of changes in fruit and vegetable prices. Reductions in these items from June to July were large enough to more than offset seasonal increases in prices of meats and eggs.

In mid-July food costs were 3 percent higher than a year ago. Nevertheless, outside of 1939, they were the lowest for July since 1934. All food groups except beverages, and fats and oils were priced higher than in July 1939. But increases were marked, only in fresh and dried vegetables, dairy products, and cereals (bread and flour). Compared with most recent years, food costs thus appear to be relatively low.

FOOD SUPPLIES. Plentiful food supplies for the 1940–41 season are indicated in the latest check on the national food situation made by the Department. According to this survey prospects for this season compared with last year's big supplies are as follows:

INCREASES: Lard, dairy products other than butter, rice, fresh and canned fruits.

LITTLE CHANGE: Meats, canned and fresh vegetables, wheat, potatoes, dry beans.

SMALLER: Poultry, eggs, dried fruits, sweetpotatoes, butter.

Most of these changes are small and supplies of most foods are expected to be in line with those of recent years.

APPLES. Supplies probably will be considerably smaller than last year and below average.

MELONS. Cantaloup and watermelon supplies during the remainder of the season probably won't differ much from a year ago.

MEATS. Seasonal increases in pork, beef, and lamb supplies are in prospect for September. More lamb, about the same amount of pork, and slightly less beef is the outlook for this period.

FRESH VEGETABLES. More cabbage, about the same amount of potatoes, and less onions than last year are expected this fall and winter.

EGGS. September supplies probably will be smaller than last year, as well as seasonally smaller than in August.

PUBLIC LIBRARY
OCT 7 1940
DETROIT

IN THIS ISSUE

VOLUME VI, NUMBER 19 ● AUGUST 1940

Homespuns for Farm Homes 3
Milk Glossary for Consumers 6
Self-help Cooperatives Turn the Trick . 8
Buy Furniture With Care 11
Pineapple Parable 14
Your Food Supplies and Costs 15

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 252960°

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, 5 cents per copy, 50 cents per year, 80 cents, foreign.